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U.S. SHARE OF JAPAN'S FOREIGN RICE PURCHASES EXCEEDS 50%

U.S. Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky announced today that Japan is buying more than half its rice imports from the United States during the current Japanese fiscal year (April 1997-March 1998). This represents a new high for U.S. exports of rice to Japan in the post-Uruguay Round period. Under Uruguay Round commitments, Japan pledged to substantially open its rice market to foreign suppliers. The United States will supply 50.1% of Japan's rice imports for the year ending March 31, 1998.

"U.S. rice is highly competitive, in both price and quality, and this growth in exports demonstrates that U.S. producers can be highly successful in the Japanese market," Ambassador Barshefsky stated. "We are pleased with the increase in Japanese purchases of U.S. rice this year. Japan has been a market of exceptional importance for U.S. rice and this action demonstrates again the gains for U.S. rice growers from trade agreements."

Under Uruguay Round commitments, Japan agreed to expand its minimum market access for imported rice. The commitment for Japanese Fiscal Year (JFY) 1997 was to import 530,600 metric tons (on a milled basis). The most recent Japanese tender, on January 16, resulted in purchases of 73,000 tons of rice from the United States, out of a total of 91,900 tons (brown and milled rice). The January tender completes Japan's rice buying for the current fiscal year, JFY 97.